

# Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge

## *Planning Newsletter and Issues Workbook*

### Comprehensive Conservation Planning

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is starting work on a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The plan will establish management goals and objectives for all refuge programs over the next 15 years. For example, our wildlife, habitat, land protection and visitor services programs will all be evaluated during the planning process.

This planning project provides a unique opportunity for the Service to involve individuals and local communities in the long-term management of the refuge. You can play a significant role in the development of the this far-reaching plan!



*Forested wetland on the refuge/USFWS*

### Who will be involved in developing the plan?

The local refuge staff in Warsaw, VA will lead the effort, with assistance from the Service's Northeast Regional Office. We will invite other Service experts, as well as representatives from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, to serve on our core planning team.

We hope that you and other interested groups and individuals, will involve yourselves in this plan by helping us evaluate current management, envision desired future conditions on the refuge, plan the future of our public use programs, and get a feel for other important issues. We hope to engage local residents and community leaders in discussing ways the refuge could become a welcome and integral part of the community. Please let us know how we can reach you with further details by completing the mailing information on the back of this newsletter.

### How Can I Get Involved?

The Issues Workbook starting on page 3 is an attempt to jump start your involvement. We will also provide other forums to facilitate public participation. Below is a list of options we intend to use. We would be interested to know if you have other ideas you would like us to pursue.

- Contact us at any time
- Hold open houses (see next page)
- Distribute a community survey
- Develop informational newsletters
- Write feature articles
- Participate in civic and professional group events
- Give presentations at town and community leadership meetings
- Hold working group sessions and technical expert meetings
- Continue partnerships



*Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge*

# Planning Newsletter

## Upcoming Open Houses

### Monday, December 5

2:00 - 4:00p.m.

Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries, Headquarters Building  
VDGIF Board Room  
4000 West Broad Street  
Richmond, VA

### Tuesday, December 6

7:00 - 9:00p.m.

Port Royal Firehouse  
Port Royal Volunteer Fire  
Department Meeting Room  
King Street  
Port Royal, VA

### Thursday, December 8

2:00 - 4:00p.m. & 7:00 - 9:00p.m.

Rappahannock Community College  
Warsaw Campus  
Rappahannock Community College  
Workforce Development Room  
52 Campus Drive (off of Route 360)  
Warsaw, VA

*1/2 - hour presentation by refuge staff  
will also be part of each Open House.*

*All facilities are fully accessible.*

## What should I know about Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge?

The Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is the newest of four refuges that comprise the Eastern Virginia Rivers NWR Complex. The other three refuges include James River, Plumtree Island and Presquile NWR. The 7,712 acre refuge was established in 1996 to conserve and protect fish and wildlife resources, including endangered and threatened species, and wetlands. Its approved acquisition boundary includes parts of Lancaster, Middlesex, Richmond, Essex, Caroline, Westmoreland, and King George counties in Virginia. The Rappahannock River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, bisects that boundary. Refuge habitats include freshwater tidal marsh, forested swamp, upland deciduous forest, mixed pine forest, and managed grassland.

At least four federal-listed threatened or endangered species may be found within the refuge boundary, including the American bald eagle, peregrine falcon, shortnose sturgeon, and sensitive joint vetch. The state's largest bald eagle wintering roost is located within the refuge boundary. Shorebirds, neotropical migrant songbirds, raptors, and marsh birds rely on the Rappahannock River's corridor during the spring and fall migration periods. With help from our partners and volunteers, we are restoring native grasslands and riparian forests along the River and tributary streams to provide additional habitat for these important species.

While wildlife and habitat conservation come first on refuges, excellent wildlife observation, photography, fishing, environmental education, interpretation, and hunting opportunities can be enjoyed on several units of the refuge.

The refuge is honored to host three sites on the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, the Wilna Unit (CNN20), Tayloe Unit (CNN19), and Port Royal Unit (CFB06). The Wilna Unit, located in Richmond county, is open to the public for visitation, seven days a week, sunrise to sunset. Also the location of the refuge headquarters, this site offers accessible fishing, excellent wildlife observation opportunities, and accessible nature trails.

Other refuge units are open for visitation on a reservation basis. Visit or contact the refuge headquarters for more information.

## Who's Leading this Effort?

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, part of the Department of the Interior, is the principle federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

The Service also manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for the protection of fish and wildlife populations and habitats. Refuges provide important habitats for native plants and animals, facilitating the preservation of threatened or endangered species. Refuges also offer a wide variety of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, and many have visitor centers, interpretive trails, and environmental education programs.



John Fox

Viceroy Butterfly



USFWS

Refuge Manager lending a helping hand

# Issues Workbook



*Cat Point Creek/USFWS*

## Let's Get Started...

Participation by you and other interested groups and individuals is critical to the success of this planning process. Only then can we develop effective management which reflects your interests.

At this early stage in the planning process we are seeking your input via public meetings and this Issues Workbook. Our intent is to hear directly from folks like you - to learn how you feel about the refuge, any issues or concerns you might have, as well as your ideas for getting things done.

The following workbook will be available at the public meetings, and will be shared with refuge visitors, neighbors, and partners who may not be able to attend the meetings. We have compiled a list of questions to provide a basis for comparing your comments with others we receive.

Please answer any or all questions that are important to you. Feel free to add additional comments in the space provided. Give us a call, email or write us at the address below.

The comments we receive in the workbooks and at the public meetings will help us identify issues and develop goals and objectives.

## Questions on Values, Vision and the Service's Role

1. How many days do you visit Rappahannock River Valley refuge each year?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 0 - 4 days
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5 - 10 days
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11 - 24 days
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25 - 49 days
- \_\_\_\_\_ 50 + days



*Refuge Headquarters/USFWS*

2. What are your favorite activities to engage in while visiting the refuge? What areas of the refuge do you usually visit?

# Issues Workbook



*Wilna Pond/USFWS*

3. What do you value most about the Rappahannock River watershed (Fredericksburg to the Chesapeake Bay)?

4. What do you consider to be the most important problem facing the Rappahannock River watershed?



*Wood Duck Ducklings/USFWS*

5. Have you participated in any refuge-sponsored events or activities? If so, which ones?

6. What technical services would you like refuge staff to provide to your local community? (check if appropriate)

- wetlands management/restoration \_\_\_\_\_
- management of endangered species \_\_\_\_\_
- habitat management to benefit wildlife \_\_\_\_\_
- land protection funding \_\_\_\_\_
- control of invasive plant and animal species \_\_\_\_\_
- volunteer opportunities \_\_\_\_\_
- grants for habitat management \_\_\_\_\_

other: \_\_\_\_\_



*Wilna Tract Forest/USFWS*

7. Is this the first you've heard of Rappahannock Valley NWR's management plan?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If no, how did you hear of it before?

# Issues Workbook



*Wood Thrush/USFWS*

8. Where did you obtain this workbook? (This will help us determine the most effective places to distribute these in the future.)

## Questions on Recreation and Public Access

While fish, wildlife, and plant conservation is the refuge's primary purpose, some public uses can be allowed when they do not impact these resources. In fact, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 identifies six priority, wildlife-dependent public uses to receive enhanced consideration on national wildlife refuges: environmental education and interpretation, fishing, hunting and wildlife observation and photography. These six uses will be evaluated in this planning process.

According to Service policy, only those public uses that are "compatible" with the purpose (s) for which a refuge was established are allowed. Compatibility with refuge purpose(s) is determined by the refuge manager, based on an evaluation of:

- anticipated impacts to natural resources;
- whether safety among and between users can be maintained; and,
- whether the refuge has the budget and staffing resources to administer the activity

The Rappahannock River Valley refuge has active programs for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography. Environmental education and interpretation activities are limited, given the small staff. This planning process will evaluate opportunities within each of these programs.



*Happy participant at Kid's Fishing Day/USFWS*

9. Are any of these activities, or current levels of use on the refuge, a concern?

10. In your opinion, what other wildlife-related activities should occur on the refuge?

# Issues Workbook



*Wilna Pond Boardwalk/USFWS*

11. Do our recreational facilities meet your needs? (trails, parking, boat ramp, signs, etc.) Please explain.

12. Please include here any additional comments on recreation, education, and public access.

## Questions on Natural Resources Conservation

The Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge provides excellent wildlife habitat for migratory birds, threatened species, resident fish and wildlife, and rare plant species. The tidal-influenced Rappahannock River creates a unique and richly diverse environment. This plan will emphasize the need to conserve, protect, and enhance these habitats and the species dependent on them.

13. Are there other areas within the Rappahannock River watershed that, in your opinion, need protection? If so please list them here, and explain why you think they are important.

14. Which options should the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursue in protecting important habitats in the Rappahannock River watershed? (Please check up to 3 choices)



*CB Agriculture Day/USFWS*

- ☐ land acquisition
- ☐ conservation easements; e.g. purchasing development rights
- ☐ partnerships with private land owners
- ☐ work with conservation groups
- ☐ environmental education
- ☐ grants programs
- ☐ habitat restoration
- ☐ no active involvement
- ☐ other (please specify)

# Issues Workbook



*Swallowtail butterfly/USFWS*

15. How do you feel about the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service acquiring land from willing sellers in the Rappahannock River Valley area?

16. In your opinion, which species or habitats should be a management priority?



*Rappahannock River Valley NWR  
Friends Group/USFWS*

17. Are any of the following natural resource issues a concern to you in the Rappahannock River Valley area? If so, please check your top three choices.

- ☐ the fragmentation of important habitats
- ☐ invasion of exotic plant and animal species
- ☐ overdevelopment of fragile habitats
- ☐ increased recreational use in sensitive habitat areas
- ☐ water quality
- ☐ lack of active management to improve wildlife habitats
- ☐ other issues (please specify)

18. If possible, please provide additional details on why you selected the above. In particular, we would be interested to know specific locations of concern.



*Bald eagle/Mike Lockhart*

19. Please include here any additional comments on conserving fish and wildlife habitat.

**Mail Issues Workbooks to:**

Nancy McGarigal, Refuge Planner  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035

**For Additional Information**

Contact the refuge:

Rappahannock River Valley NWR  
P.O. Box 1030  
336 Wilna Road  
Warsaw, VA 22572-1030

804/333-1470

Fax: 804/333-3396

E-mail: fw5rw\_evrnwr@fws.gov

**That's it! Thank you for your time.**

**IMPORTANT:** Now that you are done, please separate pages 3-8 and mail them back to us by January 31, 2006. We will summarize these public comments and those received at the public meeting in our next newsletter. Please help us keep our mailing list updated by completing the following.

If you wish to receive future "Planning Updates" about the Rappahannock National Wildlife Refuge comprehensive conservation plan, please fill in the appropriate information below and return the with the Issues Workbook.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Yes) Keep me on your mailing list/add me to your mailing list

\_\_\_\_\_ (No) Take me off your mailing list.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please Print)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are acting in an official capacity as the representative of an organization please complete the following two items.

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_



*Refuge Staff/USFWS*

**Federal Relay Service for the deaf or hard of hearing:**

1 800/877-8339

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>

**December 2005**

**IMPORTANT:** Please note that names on the CCP mailing list become part of the public record for this project. The Service must release names only, if requested, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974. To retain you on our mailing list we need your permission. Please sign below.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

